

Soviets Sucker Uncle Sam

The Soviet Union has suckered the United States into an agreement which will enable the Soviets to build a new mobile intercontinental ballistic missile system that will give them devastatingly overwhelming strategic superiority by 1985. That charge was made by Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, former chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency, at a Washington Press conference on August 30, sponsored by the Coalition for Peace through Strength.

Gen. Graham sketched a scenario under which the Soviet Union would build up to 900 mobile missile launchers, ostensibly for the purpose of firing a small, intermediate range ballistic missile, the SS-20, which is not covered by the restrictions imposed by the SALT II treaty. He said that the construction of these launchers has been accepted by American negotiators. Indeed, they could build as many of them as they wanted.

The fatal catch, Gen. Graham said, is that these very same launchers can be used to fire a much larger missile with intercontinental range, the SS-16. In fact, he said, the smaller SS-20 can be easily converted into the intercontinental SS-16 simply by adding a third stage of the rocket. SALT is supposed to limit the number of launchers capable of firing intercontinental missiles. It does not strive to limit the number of missiles themselves, since it would be impossible to satisfactorily verify compliance with limits on missiles. The launchers can be observed and counted by our satellites.

Gen. Graham believes that the failure of SALT II to place any limit whatsoever on the number of launchers capable of firing the intercontinental SS-16 is a fatal flaw in the agreement. He says that we could wake up some morning to find that the Soviets had simply "changed the ammunition" on these launchers, substituting missiles capable of devastating the U.S. for the short range SS-20a. If they did this on 900 launchers, this missile force alone would carry more megatonnage than the all of our land-based ICBMs. What is more, he says, these very same launchers are not destroyed by blast when the missiles are fired. They can be reloaded and used again in a matter of hours. Thus the long range missiles could be fired at targets in the U.S. and then reloaded and aimed at targets in Europe and China, just in case those countries had any idea of retaliating.

Capability Not in Question

The Defense Department does not dispute Gen. Graham's statement that these launchers are capable of firing intercontinental missiles.

How does the administration defend having negotiated a treaty that is supposed to severely limit the number of ICBM launchers when it has a loophole that permits the Soviet Union to construct an unlimited number of such launchers?

The answer is found in a little noticed paragraph of the SALT II—Article IV, paragraph 8. Labeled "Common Understanding," this paragraph stipulates that the Soviet Union will not produce, test, or deploy the SS-16 missile. It also provides that it will not produce the third stage of that missile—the stage that would convert the SS-20 into an SS-16 when added on.

General Graham charged that Soviet compliance with this paragraph is "Utterly unverifiable." He says there is not way that we can tell whether or not the Soviets are producing SS-16 missiles or those vital third stages that will convert the SS-20s into longer range missiles. Graham contends that these missiles can be concealed easily and that it would be an even simpler matter for the Soviets to hide the fact that they were producing the third stages, and holding them in readiness to attach to the SS-20s. Graham said that the only effective way to verify Soviet compliance with their agreement not to do this would be on-site inspections. There is not the slightest likelihood that the Soviets will permit that.

Thomas A. Halstead, press officer for the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, disputed Gen. Graham's assertion that Soviet production of the SS-16 missiles or their third stage could not be verified. He refused to discuss the means by which such verification could be carried out on the ground that such information was classified. Mr. Halstead conceded that Gen. Graham was knowledgeable about our verification capabilities. He thought that his judgment as to what was possible differed from the judgment of some other intelligence experts.

Mr. Halstead said that the Administration did not believe that the Soviets would try to substitute the SS-16 missiles for the SS-20s in violation of the SALT accord. He said that the Soviets would have to weigh the advantages of making such a switch against the disadvantages in the risk that this ser-

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ious violation of the agreement would be discovered by the U.S. He said that the Administration's view was that the advantage to the Soviets would be small since this switch would "not add significantly to the Soviet strategic forces because of the small size and poor accuracy of the SS-16 missile." When it was pointed out to Mr. Halstead that Gen. Graham said that the SS-16 was actually larger than our Minuteman ICBM and that 900 of them would be capable of delivering 1800 megatons of explosive power on the United States compared to only 1450 megatons for our entire Minuteman force, he said he questioned the accuracy of Graham's figures, but he did not think the data on the size of the SS-16 warhead was unclassified.

Halstead also said that the Soviets would be deterred from making this change because they would be giving up a larger number of intermediate range missiles if they substituted SS-16s for the SS-20s on the mobile launchers. However, this argument had been anticipated by Gen. Graham's claim that the launchers could be reloaded after an initial launch. That was not disputed by Halstead.

Halstead suggested that the Soviets would have to test these missiles, thus exposing their violation of the SALT accord to detection. Graham had said that the SS-16 had already been fully tested and could be considered an operational ICBM. In fact, it was considered operational by U.S. INTELLIGENCE AS LONG AGO AS 1974. He said that the Soviets had gone to great trouble to try to conceal those tests, carrying them out near the Atlantic

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Gen. Graham pointed out that the failure of SALT II to curb Soviet deployment of these mobile launchers will almost certainly be used as an argument for keeping in force protocol which presently bars our deployment of mobile ICBM launchers. The Carter Administration has decided to build a mobile system—the MX—but this cannot be deployed as planned in 1986 unless this protocol is terminated. Gen. Graham said that if the Soviets have deployed a large number of mobile launchers loaded with intermediate range missiles but capable of handling the SS-16, this will be a potent argument for retention of the protocol. The reasoning will be that in the absence of the protocol they can very quickly arm those launchers with the intercontinental SS-16, while we will be able to deploy the MX missile at a far slower rate. Thus the MX, despite its very high cost, will not be able to fulfill its intended function of answering the marked Soviet superiority in land-based ICBMs. The result, Graham thinks, will be that the protocol will be retained and the MX will be scrapped.

The Remedy

Gen. Graham says that the answer to this is to insist on a SALT II accord that is less lopsided in favor of the Soviets. He says that at least the Senate should require an amendment that would count the deployment of mobile launchers against the ceiling permitted under SALT II. This would mean dropping the fiction that we can prevent the deployment of the SS-16 missiles merely by getting the Soviets to agree not to produce them. General Graham says that this provision of the agreement is simply a fraud that has been included in the treaty for the purpose of fooling the American people. He emphasized that there is simply no way that Soviet compliance with that provision can be verified.